

Argentina

MINERA SANTA CRUZ: THE HAND OF MOYANO IN THE CONFLICT

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Between 30 and 40 people blocked Highway 3 in *Caleta Olivia* who were demanding the reinstatement of 11 workers that were dismissed from Minera Santa Cruz after having been identified in statements to the Company by their own coworkers as the perpetrators of violence at the mine.

The blockades and crisis revealed a struggle between the Mine Workers Association of Argentina (AOMA) and the Truck Drivers Union that is directed at the national level by the head of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), Hugo Moyano.

AOMA points to the Truck Drivers Union as responsible for initiating demonstrations when a group of mine workers lodged claims against the company. The workers destroyed cars and, as explained by the provincial head of the union, Javier Castro to OPI Santa Cruz (Independent News Service of Santa Cruz), “they even broke one of their coworker’s hands with a stick”.

These incidents, which were reported to the courts, resulted in an agreement between the union and the company. Castro explained that his own membership are demanding that these 11 not return to the mine and that “almost two hundred workers signed a document requesting these men not be reinstated”.

The conflict began a few days ago when the mine workers registered a complaint at the company’s San José-Huevos Verdes mine that resulted in 63 employees being sanctioned and 25 being dismissed. AOMA interceded in the incident immediately and arranged that those who were sanctioned should be lodged in different hotels in *Comodoro Rivadavia* y *Caleta Olivia* in order to keep them on the sidelines of the negotiations.

But a group composed of these 11 terminated workers explained to Digital Review, from Santa Cruz, which is the home province of the Kirchners, that they did not accept the arrangements for the accommodations. At odds with both Minera Santa Cruz and the AOMA, they began to burn tires at the entrance to the company’s office in Comodoro Rivadavia. Local sources told Digital Review that the tires were brought in a pick-up truck by the Truck Drivers Union.

Although negotiations between the union and company officials have not been completed, the issue of the dismissals has already been resolved. All workers except the 11 in question were reinstated. AOMA accepted this after understanding the situation and the claims that the 11 workers faced. AOMA said that “none of the 11 workers are from Santa Cruz, they are well paid, none of them has been working for more than a year, and they work 15 days a month”.

Subsequently, the 11 workers blockaded Highway 3, which generated a lot of resentment both within the union membership and among the inhabitants of the local area affected by the cutoff. Santa Cruz Province Governor Daniel Peralta, for one, has already warned that the prosecutor had orders to remove the 11 workers.

The story that runs behind the conflict is a battle by the Truck Drivers Union to seek affiliation of the haulage truck drivers at the mine, who are currently affiliated with AOMA. A few months ago there was a conflict between the two unions over this issue. The aforementioned 11 workers assert that they were supporters of separating from the miners union and associating themselves with the orbit of Moyano.

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